2.   (twice amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said modifying comprises replacing said packets associated with said desired time slot.

3.   (twice amended) The method of claim 2, wherein initial and replacement packets associated with said desired time slot represent respective first and second programs.

5.   (amended) The method of claim 3, wherein one of said first and second programs comprises a NULL program.

6.   (amended) The method of claim 3, wherein the step of modifying packets further comprises:

        (1) examining a packet received from said received transport stream to determine if a slot associated with said received packet corresponds to an insertion slot for said second program to be inserted;

        (2) inserting, into an output transport stream, a next packet of said second [replacement] program if said slot associated with said received packet corresponds to an insertion slot for said second program to be inserted;

        (3) inserting, into said output transport stream, said received packet if said slot associated with said received packet does not correspond to an insertion slot for said second program to be inserted; and

        (4) repeating steps (1) through (3) for each packet of said received transport stream until a replacement stream has been fully inserted into said output transport stream.

7. (twice amended) An apparatus for processing a transport stream comprising N time slots for transporting therein N respective programs having a common time base indicated by a periodically inserted time stamp, said apparatus comprising:

        a transport clock source CLK;

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a frequency divider for dividing a timing signal CLK from said transport clock source into N timing signals;

N transport encoders coupled to said frequency divider for respectively receiving and encoding said N programs; and

a multiplexer, coupled to an output of said N transport encoders, for receiving and modifying packets associated with a desired time slot of one or more transport encoded program streams, said multiplexer producing a processed transport stream, wherein said processed transport stream includes the same periodically inserted time stamp provided by said received transport stream.

10. (amended) The apparatus of claim 7, wherein said modifying comprises replacing said packets associated with said desired time slot.

12. (amended) Apparatus for processing a transport stream comprising a plurality of time slots for transporting therein a respective plurality of programs having a common time base indicated by a periodically inserted time stamp, said apparatus comprising:

a transport clock source;

a frequency divider, for dividing a transport clock timing signal from said transport clock source into a plurality of timing signals; and

a plurality of encoders, each of said encoders coupled to said frequency divider for respectively receiving and encoding said plurality of programs to produce a respective encoded program stream, each of said encoded program streams being coupled to a switch via a respective buffer memory;

said switch selectively coupling program stream transport packets from said buffer memories for modifying packets associated with a desired time slot to produce a slotted transport stream, wherein said slotted transport stream includes the same periodically inserted time stamp provided by said received transport stream.